Provide materials and training to ensure data quality, consistency, and accuracy

Many Better Buildings Neighborhood Program partners found that it is important to get buy-in from program staff and contractors on the importance of data integrity to the program mission and then to invest time to develop materials and train everyone who has a role in data collection and analysis. In this way, programs administrators can ensure that staff understand the what, how, and why of data collection and analysis requirements.

- In the Maryland Department of Housing & Community Development's (DHCD) commercial, multifamily and residential programs - collectively known as **Be SMART Maryland** [1], discrepancies arose in the variety of ways contractors determined energy savings and the type of energy modeling software used. Contractors utilized diverse auditing software which in turn used different factors and algorithms to determining overall energy savings. At times, their upgrade reports submitted to the program omitted many input fields used to determine the energy cost savings and did not include units of measure (therms, kWh, etc.). Be SMART Maryland developed a standard methodology for estimating energy savings by requiring certain information fields such as estimated energy savings percent and having DHCD quality assurance inspectors (who are Building Performance Institute, Inc. certified and trained in energy auditing) review energy audits reports for reasonableness. For the multifamily energy efficiency programs, the program developed a **standard energy audit guide** [2], and energy auditors were required to follow one of several DOE approved audit approaches.

- The **Missouri Agricultural Energy Saving Team —A Revolutionary Opportunity** [3] (MAESTRO) program faced a challenge concerning the level of specificity in auditors' reports and the precision used in determining audit results. In many of the most rural areas of the state, auditors were simply unaccustomed to the level of precision required by the program. To address the problem with those auditors, the program identified the utility company supplying energy to the audited homes, identified their utility rates at the time of the audit, and then applied these data to a data-driven model established by auditors who operated at the required level of quantifiable data.

- Seattle's **Community Power Works** [4] (CPW) program provided contractors with **multiple trainings** [5] and a well-staffed hotline for communication and assistance throughout the grant period. Training began with a program overview session for new participating contractors focused on program logistics that informed contractors of the program's intent, rebate structures, and expectations. Other trainings covered basic safety, quality oversight, and use of their mandatory reporting database, which the program used to track projects and workforce development. To help contractors improve their performance, program staff used survey results to provide feedback to contractors on quality assurance, customer satisfaction, and compliance with program requirements.

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Links

[1] http://www.mdhousing.org/Website/Programs/BeSmart/
[2] http://www.dhcd.state.md.us/Website/Programs/MEEHA/documents/MF_Energy_Audit_Guide.pdf
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